

Urban Design Review Panel Comments

Date	March 17, 2021	
Time	1:00	
Panel Members	Present Chad Russill (Chair) Ben Bailey Katherine Robinson Jeff Lyness Gary Mundy Glen Pardoe	Distribution Chris Hardwicke (Co-Chair) Anna Lawrence Beverly Sandalack Michael Sydenham Jack Vanstone Noorullah Hussain Zada
Advisor	David Down, Chief Urban Designer	
Application number	DP2021-0744	
Municipal address	6660 Country Hills Bv NE	
Community	Cornerstone	
Project description	New: Retail and Consumer Service, Supermarket, Drive Through, Restaurant: Licensed - Medium, Restaurant: Licensed - Large, Restaurant: Food Service Only - Small, Fitness Centre, Financial Institution, Child Care Service, Liquor Store, Cannabis Store, Sign - Class C (Freestanding Sign - 4) (3 phases, 13 buildings)	
Review	Second (Previous: PE2020-02182)	
File Manager	Evan Goldstrom	
City Wide Urban Design	Dawn Clarke	
Applicant	Anthem Properties	
Panel Position	Endorse	

*Based on the applicant's response to the Panel's comments, the Chief Urban Designer will determine if further review will include the Panel or be completed internally only by City Wide Urban Design.

Summary

The Cornerstone Shopping Centre is a vehicular oriented, commercial development in North East Calgary. The Applicant presented to UDRP during the pre-application stage. At that time, the Panel identified the context to include a future transit station, medium density residential and a future high school immediately adjacent to the site. Commentary focused on activating the street-oriented buildings, improving the public street edges, and enhancing internal pedestrian conditions across the site. The Panel suggests that these qualities were mostly addressed, and the application generally meets expectations from the Panel.

The application references proximity to a future LRT station, though the completion date is an unknown and may not be for +/-20 years. While this duration may seem extensive in some regards, it is relatively small in the life expectancy of the project. Positive urban design outcomes and a minimum parking ratio of 4.4 stalls per 1000sf plus two (2) drive-throughs, are at odds at one another in principle, emphasized by the proximity to the future LRT station. Site densification is referenced, though no plans show how this is meaningfully considered or may be achieved. Further refinement is recommended by the Applicant for improved long-term success of this (potential) focal point in Cornerstone.

To the benefit of the overall vision, the Panel recommends the Applicant review the following concerns summarized below and reinforced in the categorized elements that follow:

- The submitted application depicts a Main Street internal to the site with dual fronting stores. This is viewed as a positive site attribute, however with parking fields on both sides of the Main Street, the Panel is concerned that that the focal Main Street quality will not be achieved. Tenants are likely to face outwards towards the parking areas and back onto this feature. Furthermore, the pedestrian connection, though perceived as being strong throughout the rest of the site, does not allow a direct/through east-west connection to the Main Street. This will force circulation around the perimeter of the buildings. Acknowledging the difficulty in finding dual-fronting tenants, the reality of outward facing front doors should

be addressed in better detail as the built condition is anticipated to differ from the envisioned Main Street quality.

- Some transportation aspects appear to present concern and should be reviewed in greater detail. The two most notable elements include: A) the alignment of the east driveway and the ‘cant’ in the road, and B) drive through proximity/maneuvering related to the east site access.

Urban Design Element	
<p>Creativity <i>Encourage innovation; model best practices</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall project approach as it relates to original ideas or innovation 	
UDRP Commentary	The project is not overly creative in its design or implementation. As a vehicular oriented development subscribing to a suburban commercial shopping centre typology, it is very much expected. While the Main Street potential is appreciated, the built reality of this condition regarding the outward facing tenant desire requires further review for an improved probability of success.
Applicant Response	As the heart of the shopping centre, it is important to Anthem that High Street be a success. The pedestrian network design and landscape all seek to direct people along the central spine of Highstreet. The generous plazas on the south portions of building G and H will encourage people to meet and gather, and tenants will be selected to activate those plaza areas. High Street is also designed to accommodate temporary closures for festivals or community events.
<p>Context <i>Optimize built form with respect to mass and spacing of buildings, placement on site, response to adjacent uses, heights and densities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massing relationship to context, distribution on site, and orientation to street edges • Shade impact on public realm and adjacent sites 	
UDRP Commentary	Previous Panel commentary relating to the activation of street-oriented buildings, improving the public street edges, and enhancing internal pedestrian conditions across the site have been improved from the previous UDRP presentation.
Applicant Response	Noted.
<p>Animation <i>Incorporate active uses; pay attention to details; add colour, wit and fun</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building form contributes to an active pedestrian realm • Residential units provided at-grade • Elevations are interesting and enhance the streetscape 	
UDRP Commentary	Panel commentary regarding improved porosity and animation focused along the buildings fronting Country Hills Boulevard and added glazing along the southern facades. While appreciating these are back areas to the tenants, these elevations are highly visible and should be improved. Elevations are not overly interesting, though are executed through good materiality.
Applicant Response	The level of detail on these elevations is identical to the detail on the facades facing away from the street, with the exception that they do not incorporate storefront. “Fake” storefronts and spandrel glass has been intentionally avoided to maintain the authenticity of the project and not confuse customers.
<p>Human Scale <i>Defines street edges, ensures height and mass respect context; pay attention to scale</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Massing contribution to public realm at grade 	
UDRP Commentary	The project is of single storey typology and therefore, meets expectations by virtue of building mass. Limited canopies are noted, but overall project design is improved by landscaping proposed.
Applicant Response	Noted.
<p>Integration <i>The conjunction of land-use, built form, landscaping and public realm design</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking entrances and at-grade parking areas are concealed • Weather protection at entrances and solar exposure for outdoor public areas • Winter city response 	
UDRP Commentary	Refer to Animation and Connectivity for related subject matter.
Applicant Response	

<p>Connectivity <i>Achieve visual and functional connections between buildings and places; ensure connection to existing and future networks.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian first design, walkability, pathways through site • Connections to LRT stations, regional pathways and cycle paths • Pedestrian pathway materials extend across driveways and lanes 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>Pedestrian connections are greatly improved from the PE presentation reviewed previously. The project proposes strong connections, except for the central East-West connection which is interrupted by both Buildings G and H. This creates a disconnect to the Main Street, which arguably should be the strongest connection. Applicant to review breaking these buildings to improve connectivity, through narrow but well-designed spaces. These are viewed as opportunities to be fun and creative, appropriately lit and inviting.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>We appreciate the recognition of our efforts to create the high level of pedestrian connectivity.</p> <p>We have studied splitting buildings G and H with an east-west connection and can not reasonably accommodate this request for a number of reasons. It has been acknowledged that 2-sided retail is very challenging. Pragmatically, small 4-sided retail buildings will be functionally impossible. Tenants require back of house areas to function (kitchens, washrooms, storage, utility rooms, staff rooms) and these areas can not be placed on glazing. Furthermore, narrow passages between the buildings would create a CPTED concern. We have invested a significant effort to create an exceptional pedestrian design that results in a safe, functional and interesting path of travel through the centre to support the long term success of the tenants. Landscape design and the thoughtful pedestrian network design encourage pedestrians to experience the length of High Street</p>
<p>Accessibility <i>Ensure clear and simple access for all types of users</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrier free design • Entry definition, legibility, and natural wayfinding 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>Project meets accessibility expectations.</p> <p>While the Main Street is viewed as a positive site attribute, the Panel is concerned that the focal Main Street quality will not be achieved. Tenants are likely to face outwards towards the parking areas and back onto this feature. Acknowledging the difficulty in finding dual-fronting tenants, the reality of outward facing front doors should be addressed in better detail as the built condition is anticipated to differ from the envisioned Main Street quality. Applicant to also consider removal of curbs (or Woonerf approach) in the Main Street area to strengthen the desired quality in this area.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>We appreciate the interest in a Woonerf approach, which can promote a more pedestrian friendly environment. We have modified the road and curb design along main street so that there is a minimal 3" elevation difference between the sidewalk and the road to create to retain definition between the road and sidewalk, while introducing a roll over curb design that enhances the Woonerf character. The distinct character of High Street is also supported by unique landscaping, significant plazas to support placemaking and activation, and a pedestrian network that encourages customers to enjoy the length of High Street.</p>
<p>Diversity <i>Promote designs accommodating a broad range of users and uses</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retail street variety, at-grade areas, transparency into spaces • Corner treatments and project porosity 	
UDRP Commentary	<p>At-grade plaza areas are commended and anticipated to be positive attributes to the development. The plaza area east of Building C is currently showing a transformer and is bookended by the waste and recycling enclosure. While it is acknowledged not every area is suitable for an active siting area, the current design shows upgraded paving and intentions for enhanced architectural treatment. Elements such as overhead lighting may further this effort, for greater visual experience in this area and should be explored. Small seating areas along this façade, in lieu of the continuous soft landscaping, could have benefit for designed activity.</p>
Applicant Response	<p>This area is severely compromised by the underground utility service infrastructure. We have significantly reduced the amount of concrete in the area to soften the experience but are otherwise limited by Enmax and other services running underground.</p>

<p>Flexibility <i>Develop planning and building concepts which allow adaptation to future uses, new technologies</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project approach relating to market and/or context changes 	
UDRP Commentary	The project is inherently flexible in the adaptation of new and changing tenants. Applicant to review future densification through shadow plans, as no plans have been shown that address how this is meaningfully considered or may be achieved when the LRT influences the market demand from the current state and the area transitions to its intended Transit-Oriented-Development context.
Applicant Response	We have provided plans to show how the site can intensify as demand changes over time.
<p>Safety <i>Achieve a sense of comfort and create places that provide security at all times</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and security • Night time design 	
UDRP Commentary	As noted in the comment summary section, some transportation aspects appear to present concern and should be reviewed in greater detail. The two most notable elements include: A) the alignment of the east driveway and the 'cant' in the road, and B) drive through proximity/maneuvering related to the east site access.
Applicant Response	The alignment of the east-west road provides the proximity, and the necessary number of parking spaces, close to the front door of the key anchor tenant. We have improved the safety of this access by eliminating parking spaces that were backing directly into the access road from Cornerstone Boulevard. We have revised the drive thru and increased the turn radius for vehicles exiting the drive thru to provide better spacing and mitigate any potential conflicts.
<p>Orientation <i>Provide clear and consistent directional clues for urban navigation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance natural views and vistas 	
UDRP Commentary	Building C is located on the terminus of the Main Street and currently, is consistent in quality compared to areas of low visibility. The Panel recommends greater emphasis be placed on this façade, to enhance the quality in this area.
Applicant Response	Building C is a multi-tenant building, and after numerous design studies, we think the current design with the brick arch centered on main street is the most successful. The wide sidewalk area provides and opportunity for tenants to activate this area.
<p>Sustainability <i>Be aware of lifecycle costs; incorporate sustainable practices and materials</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site/solar orientation and passive heating/cooling • Material selection and sustainable products 	
UDRP Commentary	The project integrates forward-thinking storm collection details under the sidewalk, which assists to offset the greenfield development realities. Opportunities to incorporate long term sustainability aspects such as future densification should be studied.
Applicant Response	We have provided plans that illustrate how the site can be densified as demand in the area changes over time.
<p>Durability <i>Incorporate long-lasting materials and details that will provide a legacy rather than a liability</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of low maintenance materials and/or sustainable products • Project detailed to avoid maintenance issues 	
UDRP Commentary	The proposed materials of brick, metal, and cementitious board are of higher quality and present no concern to the Panel.
Applicant Response	Noted.